

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA
ROME DIVISION

JIM BARRETT,)
)
Plaintiff,) CIVIL ACTION NO.:
) 4:15-CV-0055-HLM
v.)
)
WALKER COUNTY SCHOOL)
DISTRICT, MR. DAMON RAINES in)
his official and individual capacities,)
MR. MIKE CARRUTH, in his official)
Capacity,)
)
Defendants.)

AFFIDAVIT OF MR. DAMON RAINES

BEFORE ME the undersigned authority duly authorized to administer oaths and take acknowledgements of Damon Raines, who personally appeared and after being first duly sworn and deposes and says that:

1.

My name is Damon Raines and I am employed as Superintendent for the Walker County School District.

2.

I am over the age of 18 years.

3.

I have first-hand knowledge of the facts contained in this Affidavit.



4.

The local parent who spoke at public comment on April 20, 2015, satisfied the meeting requirement with the Superintendent before speaking at public comment. His comments at public comment concerned the District's standards based grading. (Ex. A)

5.

As required by Policy BCBI, there is a procedure called Public Participation at Board Meetings-Superintendent Procedures.

6.

The procedure includes a provision as follows: "When issues arise that stimulate high community interest, the Board may schedule special meetings specifically to invite public comment."

7.

The procedure includes a provision as follows: "While citizens may use their allotted time to take serious issue with Board decisions, the Board will not permit anyone to become personally abusive of individual Board members or Board employees."

8.

The purposes behind the required investigation about employee complaints are to resolve issues at earliest time as possible for the efficient operation of the meetings and to preserve the decorum of the board meetings.

9.

The purpose behind the required meeting with the superintendent prior to requesting to speak at public comment under Policy BCBI is to resolve issues at the earliest time in order to provide the official operation of the district and board meetings.

10.

The board meeting on February 17, 2015, was to be a regular board meeting at which board votes were to be taken on agenda items. However, that meeting was cancelled due to inclement weather.

11.

The board agenda items from the meeting on February 17th, which was cancelled, were transferred to the meeting on March 10, 2015.

12.

The meeting on March 10, 2016, included board votes on agenda items. (Ex.B)

13.

Jim Barrett never informed me that he ever had any urgent issue that he wanted to speak on during public comment at the board meeting of the Walker County Board of Education.

14.

Neither the Board meeting for February 17, 2015, nor the Board meeting for March 10, 2015, included any agenda item regarding the grading policy.

15.

The board meetings on August 12, 2015, and October 14, 2014, included an item on Standards-Based Learning. (Ex. C)

16.

Jim Barrett requested by email information on September 10, 2014, to speak at public comment. The same day, my staff provided him with the Policy BCBI, which established what he needed to do in order to speak at public comment. (Ex. D)

17.

I sent Jim Barrett an email on March 3, 2015, informing him that his name will be placed on the agenda for the Board meeting on March 10, 2015. (Ex. E)

18.

During the meeting on February 9, 2015, I handed Jim Barrett an investigation report of the items that he had asked to investigate. (Ex. F)

19.

During the 2015-16 school year, staff and administrators can ask questions or make comments about Standards-Based Grading through the informational newsletter that is circulated weekly entitled On-Going Conversations. (Ex.G)

20.

Jim Barrett testified that he had spoken at regular board meetings in the past without being required to meet twice with the Superintendent. (Doc. 25-1, p. 5, ¶ 15) However, a review of the Board meeting minutes from July 2007 to present do not reflect any such comments by Mr. Barrett.

21.

Attached to this affidavit are true and correct copies of the documents contained in Exhibits A – G.

FURTHER AFFIANT SAYETH NOT.

Damon Raines

Damon Raines

Sworn to and subscribed before me
this 19th day of February, 2016.

Janet Cobb

NOTARY PUBLIC

My commission expires: 05-21-2019

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This is what
Mr. Baker Read

①

I want to first say thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak before you this evening. I want to speak with you about the county's implementation of a grading system that is inappropriate for secondary students.

I have a daughter finishing her Junior year in the Honors Academy at Ridgeland High School. Because this is our 2nd child through the same program, I've had experience with her teachers throughout the past 7 years, and have only high compliments for their professionalism and the high academic standards and expectations they hold for their students.

Prior to this year my daughter had maintained a 4.0 GPA from grades K-10, which has been corroborated and substantiated by every exceeding standardized test score, including the Writing Test, CRCT, ITBS, PSAT, AP, and most recently, the ACT test. Additionally, she has involved herself in extracurricular and honors activities, and has never strayed from her personal path towards her future ambitions and goals.

This year, the County decided to implement a new grading system, K-12, that would be "good for the kids". It was at first referred to as "standards based grading", and has more recently been referred to as a "hybrid model" of standards based grading, or SBG. Throughout the year, I have been very vocal with my daughter's teachers and administration about the fact that the new system was not working. It simply does not adequately reflect students' learning (On many levels, academically and attitudinally). I have attended open parent meetings, during which time other parents expressed similar concerns; I have also attended several private, closed-door meetings with both Ridgeland and Walker county administration. I have been witness to complaints from students, parents, teachers, and citizens throughout the county who also feel that this new grading policy is ineffective. Virtually none of the tenets, as put forth by county administration, have been properly placed into practice. All year I have informed the administration that the process was not working, and was not "good for the kids".

Multiple times this year I have asked the following questions to county administration:



(2)

- 1) Where is the quantitative research to support this grading model, particularly at the secondary levels? When I originally asked this of the school administration, I was instructed to Google it.
- 2) Why was the new grading system implemented without first fully training the teaching staff?
- 3) Why were stakeholders, namely teachers, students, and parents, not involved in such an enormous overhaul of our entire education system?
- 4) Why did the county decide to implement a grading system that the gradebook system does not support?
- 5) Why is the county using this hybrid model in the secondary schools, which alters original GPA's, when Scholarship applications require GPA statistics, few colleges accept it, and few high schools in the country have adopted it.

I do not have time to belabor the emotional and attitudinal damage this has done to children, or all of the promises made to parents and students throughout the year that have not been met. Suffice it to say that ALL of the tenets of the grading model have been violated, and continue to be violated, by every one of my daughter's teachers, at no fault of their own, but because they have not been sufficiently trained.

We are now weeks away from the end of the school year when grades will go historical, and these issues are still unresolved. My high achieving daughter was on track to receive the Zell Miller full tuition scholarship, along with several other private scholarships. However, for the first time in her school career, she has struggled not only to maintain A's, but simply to pass. At one point this quarter she had three D's and one F, not on her own merits, but due to this poorly conceived, weak, and unproven grading model.

What my daughter is experiencing is not unique to just her. Last month, my wife communicated with county administrators regarding the widespread issue of students in Ridgeland's Honors Academy failing classes, and thus not being eligible to volunteer for Special Olympics. Changes were not made... The proof is in my daughter's gradebook. One of the Community Service clubs that she is a member of at Ridgeland hosted a blood drive last week. It has always

(3)

been staffed by student leaders and members, about 40 students in all. Yet this year, all of its leaders, who are all students within the honors academy, were informed by their advisor that none of them qualified to volunteer because they were all failing at least one class. Furthermore, all of the club members in one of the most advanced honors classes, about ten in all, were called aside by their teacher to be informed that not one of them was eligible to participate in the blood drive because they did not meet the academic requirements. How can this possibly be considered "good for the kids"...Gifted kids? It is a travesty.

There is a reason few secondary systems in the country, and none that I can find in the state of Georgia, are implementing this type of grading model.

I implore you to listen to parents, students, and teachers. They are the ones who are in the trenches experiencing this and are impacted by it. It is not the students' fault for an ill-conceived plan, yet they are the ones who are being penalized by it. I am asking you to cease the current implementation in the secondary levels. If not, then I ask that you at least hold open forums (not submit closed-ended surveys) but have open forums, during which time stakeholders will have a realistic, unadulterated voice in this matter. This is not a problem with a single student, teacher, department, or school. This is a systemic problem county-wide that is detrimentally impacting many students, with potential long-term, irreversible effects. Walker County needs to implement a grading system that is truly "good for the kids".

In Conclusion,

- 1) Standards-based Grading, does not work at the secondary levels.
- 2) It has been poorly and improperly implemented in Walker County Schools this year.
- 3) It is failing our secondary students in every sense of the word.
- 4) A Hybrid model of Standards-based and traditional grading does not work. You cannot breed two different species with completely different genetic make up and expect an offspring that will be fruitful. It is an infertile offspring.
- 5) Walker County needs to return to traditional grading practices for secondary students. Then, Walker County should train any

(4)

educators who demonstrate inadequacies in their grading practices, rather than enforcing all educators to change to a flawed system because of a few educators:

At the beginning of the year, I had never questioned anyone's sincerity in the philosophy behind this new grading concept. There was, no doubt, a genuine belief that this would be "good for the kids". In fact, ~~and we were asked to be patient~~ I was hopeful that with that sincerity came a fruitful result. But now I fear that it is little more than a headstrong pride that is continuing to push this agenda, which is ultimately clouding proper judgment and discernment for the students' best interest. People can be very sincere with their intentions...yet still be sincerely wrong. And this is a flawed system...and it is sincerely wrong for the students in high stakes grade levels. And I believe it should be investigated further with much scrutiny by the public and by the school board.

With my daughter's permission I am giving you a redacted copy of her grades, along with notes I've added to explain various infractions in the grading policies.

Thank you again for your time, and thank you for listening.

PLANNING SESSION

The Walker County Board of Education met in planning session on Tuesday, March 10, 2015, at 6:00 p.m. at the Advancing Education Center, 925 Osburn Road, Chickamauga, Georgia. Board members present were Mr. Mike Carruth, Chairperson, Mr. Dale Wilson, Vice Chairperson, Ms. Phyllis Hunter, Ms. Karen Stoker, and Mr. Charles Wilson. Mr. Damon Raines, Superintendent, was also present.

Mr. Carruth called the meeting to order and welcomed those present.

Mr. Dale Wilson gave the invocation.

Approval of Board Agenda: Mr. Carruth called for a motion to approve the Board Agenda as presented. Ms. Stoker made the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Charles Wilson and approved unanimously.

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS

Facility of the Month – Fairyland Elementary School: Mr. Jeremy Roerdink, Principal at Fairyland Elementary School, along with Ms. Caroline Williams, current PTO President, presented the Board and those in attendance information on all the on-going activities at Fairyland Elementary School.

STAR Students: Mr. John Parker, Coordinator of Secondary Education, congratulated STAR Students, Robert Benson from LaFayette High School and Chad Smith from Ridgeland High School for their hard work and dedication during the school year. Chad Smith was in attendance and accepted his cash award and certificate.

INDIVIDUAL ACTION ITEMS

1.

Financial Report: Mr. Carruth called for a motion to approve the financial report for the month ended December 31, 2014. The total for local and state revenue is 52.79% of the budget. Local revenue is at 59.01% of the budget. The total for expenditures is 46.32% of the budget, which is 3.68% below the fiscal year complete, which is 50% completed. With a motion from Ms. Hunter and a second from Ms. Stoker, the motion was approved unanimously.

2.

FY2016 Draft Calendar: Mr. Carruth asked the Board for a motion to approve the Superintendent's recommendation to approve the FY2016 Draft Calendar as presented. With a motion being made from Mr. Dale Wilson, and a second being made



from Mr. Charles Wilson, the motion unanimously carried to approve the Superintendent's recommendation.

3.

FY2015 School Year Weather-Related Days: Mr. Carruth called for the Board to make a motion to approve the recommendation submitted by the Superintendent to approve the weather-related make-up day schedule that includes the Board's action to forgive two of the days the Walker County School System was closed due to inclement weather. With a motion from Ms. Hunter and a second being made from Ms. Stoker to approve the Superintendent's recommendation, the motion carried unanimously.

CONSENT ITEMS (#'S 1-8)

1.

Minutes of Previous Meetings: The minutes of the planning session that was held on January 13, 2015, and the regular session that was held on January 20, 2015.

2.

Medical Provider Services, Inc. -- Medical Provider Services, Inc. assists Georgia school systems in obtaining the maximum funding possible from the Georgia School Medicaid Program. This agreement will allow the Walker County School System to obtain needed assistance in order to file Medicaid for allowable services it provides to students with disabilities. Current allowable services are physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech/language therapy.

Medical Provider Services, Inc., maximizes reimbursement for the Walker County School System, while ensuring that all Medicaid requirements are met. Claims that are entered into its web-based program by noon on Friday are processed and paid by Monday of the following week.

3.

Stellar Therapy Services, LLC: The Service Contract Agreement between the Walker County Board of Education and Stellar Therapy Services, LLC, provides certified occupational therapy assistant services for the students in the Walker County School System and will be funded through Special Education VI-B funds. Federal guidelines require that children who are identified with a disability receive needed special education services and related services as determined by the Individual Education Program (IEP) team members. Related services, including the evaluation for those services, may include occupational therapy services from a licensed certified occupational therapy assistant.

Occupational therapy services must be provided by licensed professionals who are trained to deliver direct services, indirect services, and address occupational therapy needs for students who are eligible. Needs occasionally arise that make it necessary for the Board to enter into an agreement to ensure qualified certified occupational therapy

needs for students who are eligible. Needs occasionally arise that make it necessary for the Board to enter into an agreement to ensure qualified certified occupational therapy assistants are readily available if needed. A certified occupational therapy assistant is needed for the remainder of this school year to cover maternity leave for an existing employee.

4.

Purchase of iMacs – North LaFayette Elementary School: North LaFayette School is requesting the purchase of thirty iMacs from Apple Computers, Inc., in the amount of \$31,590. This amount includes the three-year Apple Care policy for each iMac. These items will increase student achievement and the utilization of OdysseyWare. This purchase will be made using Title I monies and is reflected in North LaFayette Elementary School's Schoolwide Title I Plan.

5.

Purchase of MacBook Air – Rossville Middle School: Rossville Middle School is requesting the purchase of thirty MacBook Computers from Apple Computers, Inc. in the amount of \$30,480, which includes a three-year Apple Care Plan for each iMac. These items will increase student achievement and utilize Odysseyware. This purchase is being made with Title I funds and is reflected in Rossville Middle School's Schoolwide Title I Plan.

6.

School Nutrition Bid for Large Equipment: The GEC School Nutrition bid for large equipment has been awarded to Atlanta Fixtures and Sales Company, Direct South Food Service Equipment, Mobile Fixtures, Norvel Fixtures and Equipment Company, Preferred Packaging Food Service Equipment Company and TriMark Century Concepts for the year 2015. The GEC has awarded large equipment items to seven vendors, which will allow the Walker County School System to continue to purchase any needed equipment items. All USDA procurement requirements are followed. Thirty-seven GEC systems have elected to be included in the bid.

7.

School Year 2015 School Nutrition Bid for Dishwasher: The School Nutrition bid for a dishwasher for Gilbert Elementary School was presented to Strategic Equipment Co. Inc., of Albany, Georgia, for the total amount of \$38,579.82. The dishwasher will be funded through the Nutrition Department Equipment Grant monies that were awarded. Any overage on the cost in the amount awarded to the Walker County School System will be paid through the Walker County School System Nutrition Department.

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8.

School Contracts:

- Beeler Impression Products, Inc. – Transportation Center
- Great American Savings Products Program Agreement – LaFayette Middle School – February 27, 2015 - March 13, 2015
- Lattimore Transportation – North LaFayette Elementary School – Huntsville, AL – April 29, 2015
- Madden Coach Line and Tours – Ridgeland High School – Mercer University in Macon, Georgia and Georgia College in Milledgeville, GA – March 23, 2015
- Tri Green Equipment, LLC – LaFayette and Ridgeland High Schools – Gator Utility Vehicles

A motion to approve the recommendation submitted by the Superintendent to approve Consent Items #'s 1-8 was made by Ms. Stoker and seconded by Mr. Dale Wilson. The motion unanimously carried.

ITEMS OF INFORMATION

1.

Facilities Update: Mr. Chris Jones, Director of Facilities and Operations, presented updates on the following facilities:

- Chattanooga Valley Elementary School – There are four rooms left for having HVAC systems replaced. The weather has hindered work. Canopies may be used to cover openings in order to get the remaining four replaced.
- LaFayette Middle School – The new addition, as well as the greenhouse, is now fully functional. One mobile has not been able to be moved due to the ground being so saturated. The mobile unit that recently caught fire will be demolished on site.
- Rossville Elementary School – The floors are being waxed this week. The furniture will be delivered next week. The move-in will take place slowly due to testing and getting ready for the upcoming school year. Parking is a problem right now due to the construction fence. The fence will be removed and then barrels will be set up to line off parking.
- Saddle Ridge K-8 School – The concession stand is now complete and ready to use during the upcoming soccer season.
- LaFayette High School – The agricultural barn plans have been sent to the Georgia Department of Education. As of yet, nothing has been received from the state. Once the approval arrives from the Georgia Department of Education, the project will be sent out to bid.

2.

Winter Work Session Agenda: Mr. Raines, Superintendent, discussed with the Board, items that would be on the upcoming winter work session agenda.

3.

Legislative Update: Mr. Raines discussed with the Board, legislation that is currently being considered by the state legislature concerning public education and/or that impacts public education.

4.

Review Tentative Agenda: Mr. Raines reviewed the tentative agenda items for the meeting to be held on Monday, March 16, 2015.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr. Mike Carruth, Board Chairperson, acknowledged that the Board would entertain public participation. Dr. Jim Barrett, WAE representative, was on the agenda and was not in attendance at the meeting.

Executive Session: Mr. Carruth called for a motion to enter into executive session for the purpose of personnel. Ms. Hunter made a motion to enter into executive session, and Ms. Stoker seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

At the conclusion of executive session, Ms. Hunter made a motion to return to regular session. The motion was seconded by Mr. Dale Wilson and approved unanimously.

Personnel Recommendations: Mr. Carruth called for a motion to approve the Personnel Report dated March 10, 2015, with Certificated Personnel, Non-Certificated Personnel, Substitute Teachers, Substitute School Nutrition Workers, and Substitute Transportation Workers. After a motion by Mr. Dale Wilson and second by Ms. Stoker, the Personnel Report was unanimously approved.

Adjourn: On a motion by Ms. Hunter and second by Mr. Charles Wilson, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn.



Mike Carruth
CHAIRPERSON



Jimmie Raines
SECRETARY

**AGENDA
PLANNING SESSION
ADVANCING EDUCATION CENTER
AUGUST 12, 2014**

A. CALL TO ORDER

B. INVOCATION

C. SUMMER GRADUATION

D. ACTION ITEMS

1. Resolution for Sale of Mobile Classroom Units

E. ITEMS OF INFORMATION

1. Charter System Information
2. Leader Academy
3. Cherokee Regional Library Funding
4. Standards-Based Learning
5. Facilities Update
6. Review Tentative Agenda

F. EXECUTIVE SESSION

G. PERSONNEL RECOMMENDATIONS

H. ADJOURNMENT

EXHIBIT

C

**AGENDA
PLANNING SESSION
ADVANCING EDUCATION CENTER
OCOTBER 14, 2014**

A. CALL TO ORDER

B. INVOCATION

C. ITEMS OF INFORMATION

1. Standards-Based Grading Discussion
2. Walker County Ombudsman FY2014 Program Summary
3. Facilities Update
4. Review Tentative Agenda

D. EXECUTIVE SESSION

E. PERSONNEL RECOMMENDATIONS

F. ADJOURNMENT

From: Janet Cobb <janetcobb@walkerschools.org>
Subject: Re: Papework
Date: September 10, 2014 9:23:06 AM EDT
To: Jim Barrett <jimbarrett@walkerschools.org>
Bcc: Damon Raines <damonraines@walkerschools.org>



Good morning, Mr. Barrett,

Please see the policy **BCBI - Public Participation in Board Meetings**, below for your reference. Should you need any other information, please don't hesitate to call and/or email me.

J

Policy **Descriptor Code: BCBI**
Public Participation in Board Meetings

Meetings of the Board of Education (hereinafter "the Board") are held to conduct the affairs and business of the school system. Although these meetings are not meetings of the public, the public is invited to attend all meetings and members of the public are invited to address the Board at appropriate times and in accordance with procedures established by the Board or the Superintendent.

The Superintendent shall make available procedures allowing members of the public to address the Board on issues of concern. These procedures shall be available at the Superintendent's office and shall be given, upon request, to anyone requesting a copy.

Prior to making a request to be heard by the Board, individuals or organizations shall meet with the Superintendent and discuss their concerns. If necessary, the Superintendent shall investigate their concerns, and within ten work days, report back to the individual or organization. After meeting with the Superintendent, individuals or organizations still desiring to be heard by the Board shall make their written request to the Superintendent at least one week prior to the scheduled meeting of the Board stating name, address, purpose of request, and topic of speech. Any individual having a complaint against any employee of the Board must present the complaint to the Superintendent for investigation. The Board will not hear complaints against employees of the Board except in the manner provided for elsewhere in Board policies, procedures, and Georgia law.

All presentations to the Board are to be brief and are intended for the Board to hear comments or concerns without taking action.

Walker County Schools

Date Adopted: 7/17/2006

On Sep 10, 2014, at 8:35 AM, Jim Barrett wrote:

Good morning Janet, per your reminder, please send me paperwork so that I might make a timely request to speak at the October School Board Planning Session.

Warmly,

Jim Barrett, EdD
Teacher, 7th/8th Grade Social Studies
Saddle Ridge Middle School
9858 North Highway 27
Rock Spring, Georgia 30739
Tel: 706-375-1220
Fax: 706-375-1201
jimbarrett@walkerschools.org

EXHIBIT

D

From: Damon Raines damonraines@walkerschools.org
Subject: Re: Speaking at the Board of Education Meeting
Date: March 3, 2015 at 10:14 PM
To: Jim Barrett gaebarrett@gmail.com

Dr. Barrett,

Based on my letter dated February 11, 2015, and your desire to address the full board, public participation will be part of the Board agenda on Tuesday, March 10, 2015. The meeting will be held at the Advancing Education Center (AEC) and will begin at 6:00 p.m.

This process is in compliance with current School Board Policy as well as all State and Federal law.

Mr. Damon Raines
Superintendent, Walker County Schools
PO Box 29
LaFayette, GA 30728
(706) 638-7949
(706) 638-7827 (fax)

"It is the Mission of Walker County Schools to ensure all students graduate - Ready for College, Ready for Work, Ready for Life!"

On Mar 1, 2015, at 5:42 PM, Jim Barrett <gaebarrett@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Superintendent Raines,

I received your letter dated February 11, 2015. I properly complied with Policy BCBI in order to speak at a full board meeting, rather than at a later board planning session, and was not permitted to speak to the full board in a timely manner.

--
Jim Barrett, EdD
President, Walker Association of Educators
District I Director, GAE Governing Board
gaebarrett@gmail.com
Cell: 423-284-3376

Only the individual sender is responsible for the content of the message, and the message does not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the National Education Association, the Georgia Association of Educators, or its local affiliates

*** This Email was sent by an educator at Central Office.



1. The Board of Education's decision to switch to the Standards-based Grading policy and whether proper input was obtained from the stakeholders?

The Superintendent made a decision utilizing the information provided by the Georgia Department of Education, The Governor's Office of Student Achievement, current work with Race to the Top and a School Improvement Grant (SIG) school, system level administration including all Directors, Coordinators and Building level administration, and teachers representing school level leadership teams. The decision was to begin the implementation of a hybrid standards-based grading system across the district. This decision was made to address a variety of current and pending issues that include the state led direction with standards-based classrooms and the emphasis on the connection with formative and summative assessments with the agreed upon standards. There was also some unrest among our teacher leaders and administration concerning the Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS) and Teacher Effectiveness Measure (TEM) scores that were driving their evaluation and potentially impacting their certification with the Professional Standards Commission (PSC). Two of the TAPS standards dealing with Assessment Of and For Learning; Standard 5-Assessment Strategies and Standard 6-Assessment Uses are specifically aligned with indicators evidenced by a standards-based grading system. These two standards are also aligned with the extensive professional development and training the district invested in over ten years ago with the Work Shop Model. These instructional strategies in practice more than adequately prepared our teachers for this shift in grading and offered a support mechanism for proficiency with TAPS Standards 5 & 6. The "Ongoing Conversation" has been a dialogue initiated by teachers, administrators, parents, and some students as we have tweaked components and developed the framework for this grading protocol. Additional support has been provided based on this dialogue and has included specific work from assigned academic coaches. These highly trained educators have modeled, taught, and demonstrated several best practices for all teachers that include:

- a. Leading teachers to identify specific learning targets (standards, objectives, elements)
- b. Giving students opportunities to build competency on these targets by practicing (without penalty)
- c. Collaboratively developing assessments and assuring students are assessed on those specific learning targets
- d. Addressing the critical conversations involved with students and permitting them to reassess those specific learning targets after a time of remediation.

EXHIBIT

F

2. The Schools District's Strategic Plan and the underrepresentation of teachers in the development of goals for the plan?

Discussions began last summer concerning the pending system designation as it relates to flexibility options. This decision must be made by June of 2015 and all current options require the development of a new Strategic Plan as part of the application process. Correspondence has been consistently provided by the Superintendent to all stakeholders explaining what has motivated this course of action, what are the available options, what option best fits the current mission and vision of Walker County Schools, and where we are in the process. During our December Leadership meeting information was provided to all building level administrators concerning a time line of events surrounding the development of this new plan and its intersection with the flexibility decision deadline. A new concern was the upcoming Legislative Session in January and the potential of some changes to the flexibility options as presented. We decided that the necessary momentum had developed and we would continue on the current path and respond appropriately if changes were introduced. The attached plan shows the benchmark events beginning with an introduction of this process to the leadership teams represented at each school and continuing in January with a full faculty meeting dedicated to this very important project. As a leadership team, the decision was made to align the plan as closely as possible with the latest revision of the College & Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) currently used to rate the success of each school district and individual school in the state of Georgia. Our system strategic plan template included, as its framework, components of the CCRPI in an effort to assure proper alignment. The action steps under each of these strategic priorities were to be developed at the school level by our teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and other support staff. These specific items would then be compiled at the district level and a draft plan developed based on these suggestions. All duplicate or redundant items would be consolidated, very school specific items would become part of a school-wide Title I plan (if applicable), and a draft would be formulated for continued review. All items received would be kept for consideration in the future based on need, current or future resources, and direction of the school system based on state mandated guidelines. The draft would then be sent back to each respective school for an additional review and comment period. The remaining steps are highlighted in the attached planning document. The overarching goal was to have a strategic plan developed by the very ones who would be required to implement this in their classrooms each day.

3. The District administration's philosophy and policy on tardiness, absences, and attendance in general and the consistent application of the policy across buildings?

The 2014-2015 FYI is presented to each student/parent upon entering a Walker County School. Policies and procedures are specifically detailed and certain items require consent with either a parent and/or student signature.

According to the 2014-2015 FYI under Student Conduct:

-It is the purpose of the Walker County Board of Education to operate schools in a manner that will provide an orderly process of education and that will ensure the safety of all students who attend the schools within the district. The Board believes that in order for classrooms to be satisfactory learning environments the conduct of students must be wholesome, orderly, and respectful of authority. Students shall behave themselves in such a way so as to facilitate the learning environment for themselves and other students, respect each other and school district employees, and obey students behavior policies established by the Board and by each school. In addition, students are expected to attend class regularly, be prepared for class, demonstrate courtesy toward others, dress appropriately, cooperate with school officials, respect other's property, avoid violation of the student code of conduct and practice the traits taught in the character education curriculum (Board Policy IDAG). All administrative staff members follow the FYI and current policy and procedure.

There exists some additional guidance when dealing with students currently being served under an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or a 504-plan under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Particulars involving one or both of these plans can be detailed by the 504 Coordinator at your school or the Director of Special Education Services for the District.

Current School Board Policy GARH-Leaves and Absences details specific criteria and associated protocols for employees. The school level administrator at your respective location evaluates these items using the Georgia Teacher Duties and Responsibilities Instrument (GTDRI) on an annual basis.

Specific concerns need to be addressed to the building level administrator with input from the district if needed and requested.

4. Why have teachers been told it is not possible to receive a "4" in their first TKES formal evaluations?

As part of the Race to the Top Initiative (RT3), Georgia, in collaboration with RT3 Districts, educational partners, and the Evaluation Task Force Committee developed a new effectiveness system for teacher evaluation and professional growth. The Teacher Keys Effectiveness System consists of multiple components, including the Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS), Surveys of Instructional Practice, and measures of Student Growth (SGP) and Academic Achievement. The overarching goal of TKES is to support continuous growth and development of each teacher. During the 2013-2014 school years, the Walker County School District chose to roll out a 10% implementation of TKES in an effort to introduce this new evaluation system to teachers currently part of their respective school's leadership team. This allowed for the 10% as well as the remaining 90% of teachers to preview and discover this system in a risk-free environment prior to a district-wide implementation. All information provided from the United States Department of Education, Race to the Top (RT3), Georgia Department of Education, and the Northwest Georgia Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA) has been disseminated to school level administration and all impacted school personnel as received. A full-implementation of TKES was introduced here in Walker County Schools during the 2014-2015 school years. The orientation, familiarization, self-assessment, and pre-evaluation conference processes were completed and documented in the True North Logic electronic platform. Each component involved school level administration and questions about the process were solicited during each phase. There have been no communications concerning a teacher's inability to achieve an "Exemplary" or level IV rating in one or more of the ten (10) Performance Standards at the walk-through or formative Assessment levels that originated from the Office of the Superintendent as it relates to this process. There has been much discussion here in Walker County and across the state during the phase-in and full implementation process of the new evaluation system revolving around the separation from the GTOI method of Satisfactory, Needs Improvement, and Unsatisfactory to the critical conversation involving the totality of evidence across the entire school year and the growth associated with each individual teacher. Based on current rubrics guiding each Performance Standard, the chosen wording sets the tone for the expected level of performance for every teacher at Level III. The wording at Level IV introduces the term "continually" in addition to meeting the requirements for Level III.

Specific concerns need to be addressed to the building level administrator with input from the district if needed and requested.

PLANNING SESSION

The Walker County Board of Education met in regular session on Tuesday, October 14, 2014, at 6:00 p.m. at the Advancing Education Center, 925 Osburn Road, Chickamauga, Georgia. Board members present were Mr. Mike Carruth, Vice Chairperson, Ms. Phyllis Hunter, Ms. Karen Stoker, and Mr. Dale Wilson. Mr. Damon Raines, Superintendent, was also present. Ms. Susan Wells, Chairperson, was not in attendance.

Mr. Carruth called the meeting to order and welcomed those present.

Ms. Stoker gave the invocation.

ITEMS OF INFORMATION

1.

Standards-Based Grading Discussion: Mr. Damon Raines, Superintendent presented the Board with a copy of *On-Going Conversations*, an informational newsletter that is emailed out on a weekly basis to system administrators and staff. *On-Going Conversations* consists of questions that have been asked previously during the week by teachers in the Walker County School System.

2.

Walker County Ombudsman FY2014 Program Summary: Mr. Chris Chambers, Director of Student Services, presented to the Board the Program Accountability Ombudsman report for the FY2014 school year. The report summarized the demographic information and performance on academic growth and student engagement standards to ensure academic progress and achievement.

3.

Facilities Update: Mr. Chris Jones, Director of Facilities and Operations, introduced Mr. Mario Edwards, Snyder Electric Energy Solutions Company Consultant. Mr. Edwards is in the process of visiting facilities in the Walker County School System and will prepare an audit and energy plan for each facility. Mr. Jones then presented updates on the following facilities:

- Chattanooga Valley Elementary School – The project is ahead of schedule and is moving quickly. Painting is underway and window frames are in. Dependent upon the weather, glass was to be installed today. Door frames and doors are up. HVAC is in the process of being installed in the classrooms. Restroom, hallway, and classroom flooring is being set up to begin.

